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written, with respect to any individual who requests, or is under consideration for, any personnel action, unless the recommendation or statement is based on the personal knowledge or records of the person furnishing it, and consists of an evaluation of the work performance, ability, aptitude, or general qualifications of the individual, or an evaluation of the character, loyalty, or suitability of such individual.

(c) To coerce the political activity of any person (including the providing of any political contribution or service), or take any action against any employee or applicant for employment as a reprisal for the refusal of any person to engage in such political activity.

(d) To deceive or willfully obstruct any person with respect to such person's right to compete for employment.

(e) To influence any person to withdraw from competition for any position for the purpose of improving or injuring the prospects of any other person for employment.

(f) To grant any preference or advantage not authorized by law, rule, or regulation to any employee or applicant for employment (including defining the scope or manner of competition or the requirements for any position) for the purpose of improving or injuring the prospects of any particular person for employment.

(g) To appoint, employ, promote, advance, or advocate for appointment, employment, promotion, or advancement, in or to a civilian position any individual who is a relative (as defined in 5 U.S.C. 3110) of the employee if the position is in the agency in which the employee is serving as a public official (as defined in 5 U.S.C. 3110) or over which the employee exercises jurisdiction or control as an official.

(h) To take or fail to take a personnel action with respect to any employee or applicant for employment as a reprisal for being a whistleblower. (See whistleblower)

(i) To take or fail to take a personnel action against an employee or applicant for employment as a reprisal for the exercise of any appeal right granted by law, rule, or regulation.

(j) To discriminate for or against any employee or applicant for employment on the basis of conduct that does not

adversely affect the performance of the employee or applicant or the performance of others.

(k) To take or fail to take any other personnel action if the taking of, or failure to take, such action violates any law, rule, or regulation implementing, or directly concerning, the merit system principles contained in 5 U.S.C. 2301.

Whistleblower. A present or former Federal employee or applicant for Federal employment who discloses information he or she reasonably believes evidences:

(a) A violation of any law, rule, or regulation.

(b) Mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, or an abuse of authority.

(c) A substantial or specific danger to public health or safety.

(d) Such disclosure qualifies if it is not specifically prohibited by statute and if such information is not specifically required by Executive Order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or the conduct of foreign affairs.

(e) Where the information disclosed affects only the personal situation of the complainant, it is generally to be regarded as an allegation of a prohibited personnel practice or violation of other civil service law, rule, or regulation, and the complainant will not be considered a whistleblower.

§ 145.4 Policy.

It is DoD policy that:

(a) Civilian personnel actions taken by DoD management officials, civilian and military, shall conform to laws and regulations implementing established merit system principles and must be free of any prohibited personnel practices, as described in 5 U.S.C. 2302 and § 145.3 of this part.

(b) It is the responsibility of each DoD management official to take vigorous corrective action and, when appropriate, to initiate disciplinary measures when prohibited personnel practices occur.

(c) DoD Components shall cooperate with the Office of Special Counsel by:

(1) Promoting merit system principles in civilian employment programs within the Department of Defense.

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(2) Investigating and reporting on allegations of improper or illegal conduct forwarded to the Component by the OSC pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 1206(b) (2) or (3).

(3) Facilitating orderly investigation by the OSC of alleged prohibited personnel practices and other matters assigned for investigation to the OSC by law, such as the Freedom of Information Act and the Hatch Act.

(d) DoD Components shall cooperate with the OSC by providing appropriate assistance and information to its representatives during their investigations and by furnishing to the OSC investigators copies of releasable documents requested under the authority of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, 5 CFR 1250, the Privacy Act, and Civil Service Rule V.

(e) Close coordination between DoD and OSC personnel during an OSC investigation is encouraged to eliminate duplication of effort, and to avoid unnecessary delay in initiating, when appropriate, corrective or disciplinary action. This coordination shall be conducted in full recognition of the independent statutory basis for the OSC, as provided in Pub. L. 95-454 and of the responsibilities of the Department of Defense.

(f) OSC investigative requests involving classified information shall be accorded special attention and prompt consideration under existing administrative procedures.

(g) When OSC and a DoD Component or an employee assigned DoD counsel are engaged in litigation, release of information shall be accomplished pursuant to MSPB rules of discovery (5 CFR 1201, subpart B.).

§ 145.5 Responsibilities.

(a) The *Secretaries of the Military Departments* and the *Director, Defense Logistics Agency (DLA)*, shall prescribe implementing documents to ensure that:

(1) The policies, standards, and procedures set forth in this part are administered in a manner that encourages consistency in responding to investigations of alleged prohibited personnel practices.

(2) Alleged illegal or improper conduct referred to a Military Department

or the DLA by the OSC or by OSD is carefully investigated.

(3) There is full cooperation with the IG, DoD, and the General Counsel, Department of Defense (GC, DoD), including assignment of military and civilian attorneys to represent employees suspected or accused by the OSC of committing a prohibited personnel practice or an otherwise illegal or improper act.

(b) The *General Counsel, Department of Defense* (GC, DoD) shall provide overall legal guidance, whether by the issuance of regulations or otherwise, on all issues concerning cooperation with the OSC. This authority extends to:

(1) Ensuring that DoD legal counsel is assigned upon request to represent a DoD employee suspected or accused by the OSC of committing a prohibited personnel practice or an illegal or improper act when the act complained of was within the scope of the employee's official responsibilities and such representation is in the interest of the Department of Defense; or, in unusual situations, that outside legal counsel is engaged where the use of DoD counsel would be inappropriate, and the same conditions are satisfied.

(2) Providing DoD legal counsel to seek intervention for the purpose of representing the interests of OSD or a Defense agency (other than the DLA) in an MSPB hearing resulting from charges of misconduct against an employee of OSD or a Defense agency, under the authority of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978.

(3) Seeking the assistance of the Department of Justice in responding to requests by employees for legal representation in obtaining judicial review of an order by the MSPB, under 5 U.S.C. 1207.

(4) Modifying §145.3 and Appendix to this part and issuing supplementary instructions concerning all aspects of DoD cooperation with the OSC, including instructions on OSC investigations of allegedly arbitrary and capricious withholding of information under the Freedom of Information Act or violations of the Hatch Act.

(5) Reviewing for adequacy and legal sufficiency with the IG, DoD, each report of an investigation that must be personally reviewed by the Secretary